

## **SECTION I: Introduction & Background**

My name is Dr. Katherine Mitchell. I am an internist who is fellowship trained in geriatrics. My various positions caring for the Phoenix VA Veteran population has given me a great sense of personal pride during my 5 years as a registered nurse on the hospital wards, my 9.5 years as a physician within the Emergency Department, and my 1.5+ years as medical director within the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Clinic.

Even in the wake of the Phoenix VA OIG investigation, my fellow VA employees have continued to provide vast amounts of high quality care on a daily basis within the Phoenix VA Health Care (PVAHCS) facilities. It is a great honor and pleasure to work with the many experienced employees who remain dedicated to providing and enhancing the quality of Veteran health care.

It has been amazing to see the changes within our institution over the last several months which have enabled us to rapidly address many of the needs of Veterans in our system to a degree that would not have been possible prior to April 2014. Problems with care consult backlogs, scheduling difficulties, and the EWL have been significantly reduced or resolved.

The Phoenix VA OIG Report has given our facility the opportunity to identify other areas needed for improvement within our system. As the influx of new Veterans arrives, invariably other deficiencies within our system processes need to be explored and rapidly addressed in order meet and exceed the obligations to our nation's current and future Veterans.

It is with this hope for the future that I offer this testimony so that it will serve as a springboard for further discussion and positive change within the VHA.